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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
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RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU
INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7535
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 1498
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RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 5522
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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EUR/SE, EUR/PD, NEA/PD, DRL
JCS PASS J-5/CDR S. WRIGHT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OPRC KMDR TU

SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2006

Ralston-Baser Attend Conference in Istanbul
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others report Turkish and American special envoys for countering the PKK, retired generals Edip Baser and Joseph Ralston participated Thursday in a conference held by Turkey's Eurasia Strategic Studies Center (ASAM) in Istanbul. Baser said Turkey was running out of patience with the failure of Iraq and the US to halt the PKK attacks from northern Iraq into Turkey, stressing that military operations could come on the agenda. 'Logistic and financial support going to the PKK in northern Iraq must be cut, the PKK's communication channels and human resources abroad must be disrupted, and the terrorist organization must be forced to lay down its arms,' Baser maintained. Responding to a question, Baser said the PKK in northern Iraq was gaining a considerable amount of revenues from border fees, which made a second border crossing between the two countries necessary.

In his speech, General Ralston challenged 'some rumors' with regard to the role of the US, such as Americans were not doing anything against the PKK, by saying that the US considered the PKK as illegal since 1997. He noted that the US was exerting efforts to cut logistic and financial support to the organization. Ralston underlined that in US foreign policy, the PKK is a terrorist organization, not a tool. Regarding another 'rumor' that the US was using the PKK to take revenge for Turks' March 2003 rejection of the deployment of US troops through Turkey into northern Iraq, Ralston said Americans found Turkey help invaluable and were using the Incirlik Airbase to support democracy in Iraq, that Turkey and the US are NATO allies, and that the US is supporting Turkey's membership to the EU. Ralston asked for the patience of the Turkish nation. Asked after his address whether there are maps in the US showing a restructured Middle East, Ralston said the US Defense Department did not support such maps as the one published in the private publication Armed Forces Journal. On the controversy concerning the Mahmur camp, General Ralston said Turkey, Iraq and the UN need to agree on this issue, adding such an agreement has not been made yet. Ralston also noted that the US would send a team to

Europe in the coming weeks in an effort to cut the flow of funds to the PKK.

State Department Hosts 'Iftar'

Zaman devotes its entire page 16 to a State Department Iftar hosted by Undersecretaries Nicholas Burns and Karen Hughes because Secretary Rice was on a tour of Asia. In a positive and

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straightforward tone, the paper's Washington reporter Ali Aslan quotes Burns as telling the guests that the principal problem in the Islamic world today has been 'the conflict between extremity and tolerance.' Hughes is also lauded in the report for citing a verse of the Koran to the effect that 'The Night of Power [when the Koran was revealed] is holier than a thousand months.' Hughes also emphasized the leadership traits of the Prophet Muhammad's wife Hatice and daughter Ayse. The report also recounts an anecdote how a meeting with a Turkish woman in Germany inspired U/S/ Hughes to launch her 'Citizens' Dialogue' project.

Baykal Slams Baydemir Remarks at Kurdish Conference

All papers quote the main opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal as saying 'Terrorists in the mountains and some politicians in the cities work for the same political cause,' in criticism of a statement made by the Kurdish-majority city Diyarbakir's Mayor Osman Baydemir to a Kurdish conference held in Brussels under the auspices of the European Parliament earlier this week. Baydemir had called on Ankara to share with local administrations the oil reserves and hydro-energy resources in southeastern Turkey.

Reports into Controversial Killing Investigated

Radikal reports prosecutors have opened a legal probe into human rights reports on the September 5 killing by security forces of a nine-year-old Kurdish girl, Mizgin Ozbek, while she was riding in a car with two outlawed PKK militants. Acting on a complaint by the

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Turkish jandarma, prosecutors questioned human rights organizations IHD and Mazlum-Der as well as Batman Bar and two local dailies for preparing a report on the incident that could be in violation of Article 301. The complaint by the jandarma was that the reports 'insulted the identity of security forces' and interfered with the official investigation into the killing of the girl and the two militants. Radikal criticizes the fact that those responsible for the killing were not investigated whereas reports on the incident were prosecuted.

Armenian Turks Not Happy with Foundations Bill

Sabah, Radikal and Yeni Safak report the Patriarch of the Armenians in Turkey, Mesrob II, complained that the non-Muslim foundations bill is not compatible with the principle of constitutional equality, warning that it will not solve their problems if it is passed. In a letter to Parliament Speaker Bulent Arinc, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, Mesrob II said 'We feel sorry to be considered as foreigners in accordance with the principle of reciprocity, and no one consulted us regarding our views. We, naturally, ask the parliament to solve our problems since we are the nationals of this country.'

Broadcasting Watchdog Calls for a Ban on French Films

All papers report Turkey's state broadcasting watchdog RTUK has recommended a boycott of French-made programs and movies in protest of the French Parliament's adoption of a bill making the denial the genocide of Armenians at the hand of Ottoman-Turkish troops in early 20th century a crime. In a statement issued Wednesday, the RTUK said Turkish television and radio stations should avoid airing French-made programs until France drops the Armenian genocide bill.

Babacan Meets Bakoyannis in Athens

All papers report that on Thursday, Turkey's chief EU negotiator Ali Babacan, after meeting with Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis, told a press conference that 'Ankara's January proposal concerning opening Turkish ports and airports to Greek Cypriot vessels and planes is still on the table.' Following the April 26, 2004 twin referenda in Cyprus, the EU decided to lift sanctions on Turkish

Cyprus, and Turkey clearly stated that it will not make any unilateral attempt. Greek Cypriot products are already allowed into Turkey, the limitations are about vehicles. We can open our ports and airports, but first, the isolation of north Cyprus must be ended,' Babacan said. On Turkey's EU process, Babacan said the reality necessitates that 'a train crash' on Turkey's path to EU membership not happen. He noted Bakoyannis reiterated Athens' support to Turkey's EU drive. 'It will take time for Turkey to go through a reform in mindsets,' stressed Babacan, adding 'Political reforms are easy on paper, but the implementation becomes difficult sometimes.'

New ' Formula' to Save Cargill

The economic/political Dunya reports an interim formula has been found to save from closure the US food giant Cargill's corn processing facilities in the Bursa province, by extending an earlier amnesty for those using agricultural areas for other purposes. Turkish Glucose Producers' Organization welcomed the decision, saying Cargill accounted for 55 percent of the 550,000 tons of market, stressing that the domestic sectors of chocolate, candies and soft drinks would enter into a crisis and turn to imports if Cargill was closed.

Editorial Commentary on North Korea, Iraq

Sami Kohen commented in the mainstream Milliyet (10/20): "There was only one encouraging voice, from Iran, about North Korean nuclear testing, and this is not surprising. Tehran considers itself in the same league with the North Korean regime, and Kim Jong-Il's defiance to the world comes as good encouragement for the Iranian regime's Ahmedinejad. When it comes to sanctions, Iran and North Korea

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present different pictures as the former is an oil-rich country while the latter is absolutely poor and living in despair. However, sanctions are very unlikely to make an impact on both given the nature of dictatorial regimes. The truth is that the international community has limited capability to force North Korea or Iran to give up on their nuclear program. Using military force against them will be as dangerous as their capacity to possess atomic weapons. Consensus and dialogue through diplomacy seem to be the only option. Given the current situation, the danger continues to be a fact for everyone, regardless of the distances to and from these countries."

Kamuran Ozbir wrote in the nationalist Ortadogu (10/20): "The North Korean regime plans to use its nuclear program as a bargaining card in order to start direct negotiations with the US. However, North Korea has already killed this bargaining card by conducting a nuclear test that led to a greater isolation for the regime. The UN is incapable of imposing certain sanctions, and it can even pave the way for a military option in the end. Even China might be forced to be harsh on North Korea. In any case, there is still a possibility of North Korea being more extreme and taking more radical steps. This possibility should always be kept in mind by the super powers."

Haluk Ulman opined in the economic-politic Dunya (10/20): "The Bush administration created a unique situation in Iraq with the current picture even worse than the pre-occupation period. Americans cannot find a proper civilian regime to transfer authority or cannot work through a proper security system so that they can leave the country.

Chaos and anarchy are the indispensables of Iraq. There's a dilemma for President Bush. Pulling out American forces from Iraq will pose a serious blow to the credibility and prestige of the US. Moreover, a US pullout will create more chaos in Iraq that will be even worse than before, including a strong possibility of a divided Iraq and a strong Iranian influence. The US has already started to think about 'the way out' from the Iraq problem. At this point, the upcoming report by the Iraq Working Group headed by James Baker will be very important to watch for."

Domestic News

- Opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal lashed out at DYP leader Mehmet Agar inviting the PKK to join politics, saying an amnesty would only be possible if secessionist aspirations are abandoned and terrorism is destroyed.
- The EU Commission draft report warns no discussions would be opened under social policy and employment chapters unless Turkey removes restrictions on collective bargaining and strike rights.
- The Turkish Prime Minister's Office said Thursday that Turkey has sent to Palestine USD 1 million worth of flour, sugar, rice and lentils. The office said the aid will be conveyed to the Palestinian people through the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Israel.

International News

- Le Nouvel Observateur writes the French Foreign Ministry is preparing to open an office in northern Iraq in January in an effort to assist French businessmen in their dealings in the region.
- A poll commissioned by the BBC shows that 29 percent of people in 25 countries around the globe support the use of torture in prisons under certain circumstances whereas 59 percent oppose.

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- Sixty-two Greek Cypriots have applied to a Turkish Cyprus commission demanding a return or compensation of their assets left in the north, marking an increase in applications for resolving property disputes.

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